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the *Emily*





# A JOURNEY INTO/ OUT OF OPPRESSION

by Renee Prasad

I volunteered myself to write an article -what is oppression? Easy -we already did it in Women's Studies. I thought that writing an article would help me work the problems I still had (with oppression ?!)

Well-it wasn't easy

And 2 days after my article was due, I am still confused.

Oppression 1: unjust or cruel exercise of power or authority 2: DEPRESSION--Many thanks Webster's Dictionary but somehow the dictionary definition is so sanitary--who is being oppressed? Who has the power to exercise power? Everyone has felt oppressed, the weather is oppressive, professors are oppressive - oppression is becoming rather fashionable. However, for those who are truly oppressed--well here we go; who is oppressed?

Some say: women are oppressed - blacks, natives, homosexuals, etc. But others say that men are oppressed too - whites, heterosexuals, middle class, upper class, etc. So what's oppressed?--see what I mean, piece of cake (from hell) good nights rest and bowl of cornflakes later

In her essay "Oppression", from The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory, Marilyn Frye talks about how to be oppressed is to be caught by a network of barriers, which are all interrelated to each other.

If you are oppressed you are caught between barriers-that have been set without your knowledge. Women are caught inside.

Such barriers- are established to exclude women from one world -men's-- and keep them restricted inside another--women's. What came first, the barriers or the need to have two separate worlds/realities for men and women? These barriers are systematic and they work on many levels.

Because these barriers are, in a sense, taken for granted, they are hard to see, and because they are hard to see they are hard to fight. But the people on the outside of the oppression barriers--men--benefit from the fact that there are people inside /restricted by the barriers of oppression--women'.

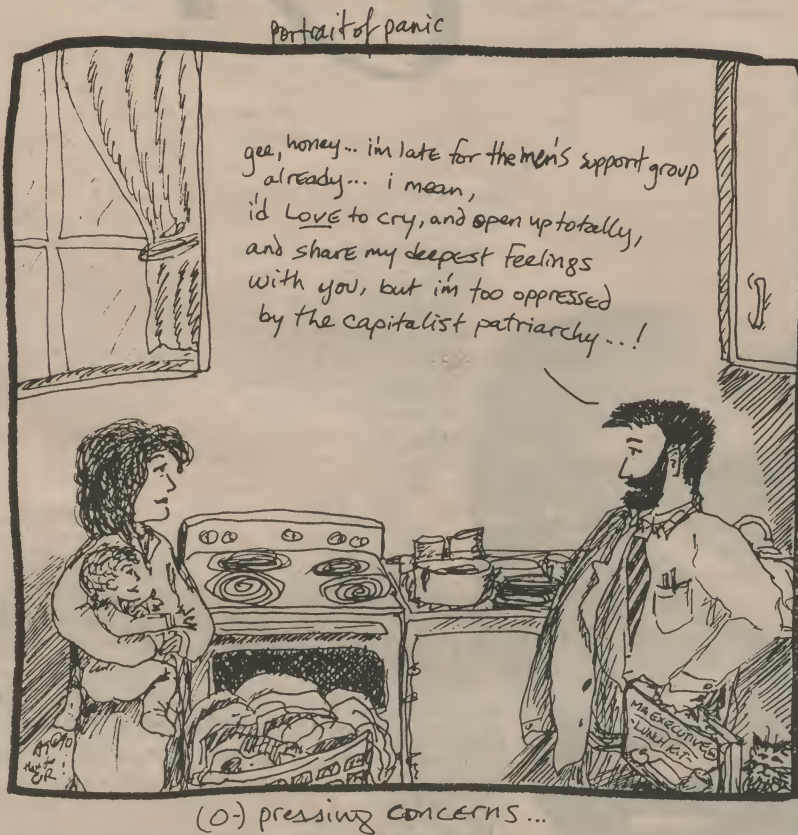
Because of this it must be hard for some, those on the outside, to accept that they benefit from the mistreatment of others, it must be hard for those inside the barriers to even begin to imagine ALL the possibilities that exist on the other side, and for both sides it must be hard to imagine a world without these barriers, beyond this point there be dragons!...

(but still a lot of unanswerable questions, e.g., are all the barriers 'bad'?)

When people say that men are oppressed do they really mean oppressed in the sense of the limitations caused by these barriers?

I know that when I hear people say - "women are oppressed", I know that when I say -"women are oppressed"--We mean those barriers are not set for my benefit, her benefit, our benefit, but for someone else's benefit.

So I wanted to write about oppression-What is oppression? I guess I am satisfied with the idea of the barriers, but tomorrow it won't be enough. Maybe I will never really understand oppression, maybe oppression is so insane that my mind can't even really begin to comprehend what I think...I think it's time to stop thinking --looks like I'll have my whole life to think about oppression--now there's an oppressive thought! BON VOYAGE!!

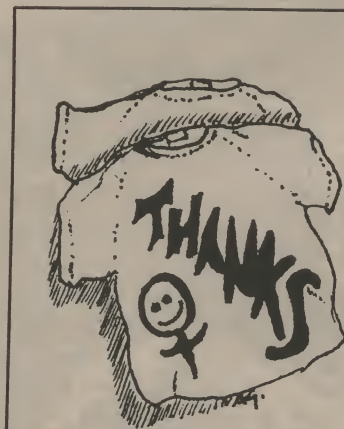


Graphic/Arthur

Cover Photo: Sojourner Truth, a 19th century feminist and abolitionist. Famous for her energetic speeches in which she addressed the problem of racism in the feminist movement.

LOOK AT MY ARM! I HAVE PLOUGHED AND PLANTED AND GATHERED INTO BARNS, AND NO MAN COULD HEAD ME--AND AIN'T I A WOMAN? I COULD WORK AS MUCH AND EAT AS MUCH AS A MAN--WHEN I COULD GET IT--AND BEAR THE LASH AS WELL! AND AIN'T I A WOMAN? I HAVE BORN THIRTEEN CHILDREN, AND SEEN MOST OF 'EM SOLD INTO SLAVERY, AND WHEN I CRIED OUT WITH MY MOTHER'S GRIEF, NONE BUT JESUS HEARD ME--AND AIN'T I A WOMAN?

SOJOURNER TRUTH



When something's good, there's no denying it's good... Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery... Sometimes we just don't check out all our sources thoroughly enough...

This is why the UVic Women's Centre collective would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the Camosun College Women's Studies department... those gorgeous t-shirts we made (and sold out of!) used their logo, unbeknownst to us or them. We'd like to thank them for their retroactive permission to use the logo, and we promise in the future to check our sources more thoroughly!

## EMILY EDITORIALISES

How is the division of labour broken down in our relationships? Or perhaps the question should be, why is the division of labour "broken down" in our relationships? If praxis is identified as the partnership of theory and practice, and if the personal is truly political, why do women assume the emotional labour in most heterosexual relationships? These may be the real million dollar questions.

In an "ideal" partnership, one would find an equal distribution of responsibilities focussing around problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, the giving and receiving of support.. The importance of good and frequent communication (i.e. listening as well as opening up) is crucial in modern relationships. It is frightening that the more we try to redefine our patterns and expressions of love and partnership, the less we have to fall back on in terms of a structured order. Therefore we have to rely on new processes to attain our larger personal goals of happiness and inner fulfillment. Of course, this takes an enormous amount of emotional labour on the part of both the partners.

If we decide to reinvent the wheel by rejecting the traditional lack of choices in favour of more egalitarian, non-patriarchal family and love relationships we are truly starting from scratch. If both partners do not assume a commitment to "treat the emotional by-products of partnership", many relationships are bound for degeneration rather than growth. If women continue bearing the load of compromise and "making sure everything is all right" we perpetuate an unequal division in the labour of love.

The realm of personal politics remains the most resistant to change. If the traditional negotiations continue to lead to lip-service (i.e let's just kiss and make up) then perhaps women, or whoever is bearing the emotional load, should just go on strike. Compromising too much energy on "family" harmony often leaves us with little left to dedicate to our work, our friendships and ourselves.

The pursuit of equality is a daily process which evolves out of discussion and mutual decision making. If we don't activate a personal peace plan our lives become like the B.C. logging industry - valley by valley battles over what takes priority, while the larger environment is destroyed and greater issues remain unaddressed. Only with patience, love and understanding of how praxis affects personal politics will we overcome. Breaking down sexist barriers means realizing that women do not have a monopoly on the emotional realm.

## A MEAL OF ONE'S OWN

by Catherine Clark

Women writers, indeed all women, understand and accept the importance of carnality to creativity. Women realize, since they have always been the curators of the kitchen, what a connection there is between food and art; sustenance and creativity; body and soul. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf addresses this link, and with it the link between women and food, with the result of legitimizing the feeding of the starving artist.

*The College Luncheon and the Soul* would have been an apt title for chapter one. The intricate and reverent way in which Woolf describes the repast shared with the Fellows of "Fernham College, Oxbridge" conveys the languid pace of the meal and its enjoyment. Complacency is the prevailing sentiment here; a full belly and a secure future. Woolf's word-painting of soles in cream sounds almost as if the college cook had tucked the fish course into bed. And the partridges' condiments seem part of an ordered structure, as if the meal is a sonnet or a song, such is its artistic appeal to the mind as well as to the appetite. To give a pudding a sense of poetry in motion is an admirable achievement, something only the curator of the kitchen could conceive or appreciate. And although it is unlikely that Virginia Woolf ever cooked for herself, her appreciation of food and the effort it exacts from those who prepare it is evident in her painstaking and unusually beautiful account of the Fernham College luncheon. Moreover, it is unlikely that it would have occurred to the most eccentric of male writers at Fernham College to so romanticize a pudding, let alone a meal.

However, at an Oxbridge women's college, Woolf's gastronomic experience causes her to think of the rumps of muddy cattle and women haggling for yellowed, half-rotten sprouts. There is no lingering over the meal; it merits neither port and walnuts, nor lengthy

description. There is no sense of contentment or secure prosperity. The meal ceases to be a sensual ritual and becomes an obligatory motion, a reflex in response to a social convention. It is ironic in the face of Woolf's thesis regarding women and food that this contrastingly poor meal is at the women's college. And it is also crucial to the idea that food is not only for the body, but also for the soul. The bland and institutional food of the female scholars and writers is an unobtrusive yet destructive force in their world. The comparative neglect of their bodies inhibits the ebb and flow of their minds as much as the restricted employments or poverty of other women stifles many an artistic soul. Unorthodox is the idea that mere food would indeed have an effect upon its consumer's creative soul.

Not so unusual an idea as all that, claims Woolf:

*One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.*

Soul, body, and food form the creative trinity. This essential truth flies in the face of conventional thought. The scholarly norm would have the soul as a helpless white balloon tied to the wrist of the *enfant terrible* of the body, whose vices are fuelled by indulgence of good food. Such a philosophy naturally excludes women from either enlightenment or the creative process because of their inescapable association with both food and the body. Virginia Woolf argues that women's carnality is the very seat of their creativity and artistry, that the soul alone cannot claim sole responsibility for higher thought. Without the body, the soul has no vehicle, and without sustenance, the body cannot function. *A Room of One's Own* legitimizes and asserts the importance of the carnality of women; and Virginia Woolf deeply scratches the surface of artistic creativity's mystery by stating the most basic of its needs. That these needs are very much part of the traditional female sphere is poignantly significant, and does much to increase the foothold of women in the artistic world.





Emily

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This issue is dedicated to the amazing and inspiring Catriona Johnson, who's off to become our correspondent from Washington, DC. We'll ms. you, Catriona!

The Emily consists of an autonomous editorial collective consisting of three co-editors (funded through the workstudy program) and contributing volunteers. All women at UVic are welcome to become members of *The Emily* Editorial Collective and/or contributors to *The Emily*. We also welcome contributions from women who are not students, but students will be given priority. *The Emily* takes first North American publishing rights, only, from its contributors. *Emily Editorialises* is written by various individual members of the collective and may or may not reflect the opinions of *The Emily* Editorial Collective.

*Emily* editorial policy is entirely determined by the Editorial Collective at the beginning of each year. Our primary aim is to promote women at UVic and their concerns as well as to provide a place for women to see their work in print. The priorities determined for 1990/91 are as follows:

- 1) to provide a forum for the voices of women
- 2) to be a women centered/affirmative action publication and
- 3) to provide a focus for feminist debate with the aims of raising awareness of women's issues and initiating social change.

It is an accepted premise that we print nothing misogynist, heterosexist, homophobic, racist, ageist, sexist, able-bodyist, or otherwise discriminatory in nature. As well, we adhere, whenever possible to the policies of the UVic Women's Centre.

*The Emily* is funded by the University of Victoria Students' Society. Our business offices are located in SUB 106, the UVic Women's Centre. Correspondence should be addressed to: *The Emily*, c/o The UVic Women's Centre, Room 106, Student Union Building, P.O. Box 3035, Victoria B.C. V8W 3P3. Advertising and other information can be given or obtained at the UVic Women's Centre or by calling 721-8353 or by faxing information to 721-8728. Subscriptions to *The Emily* are available on a yearly basis for \$10.00.

# ASSERT YOURSELF

by Tanya Cowie

Have you ever felt frustrated in conversations because of your passive, inhibited reactions; or been labelled an "aggressive woman" because you stated your mind? Counselling Services in University Centre offers free Assertiveness Training workshops which can help you alter unhealthy behavior, and understand the right to be assertive.

The Women's Centre organized a group of women to take part in this training. I was lucky to participate in the two sessions, both lasting one and a half hours. Our whole group felt the experience to be positive and beneficial. Counselor Mary-Jane McLachlan worked with the group to analyse and develop assertive behavior.

From handouts, role-playing and discussion, we learned that being assertive is healthy and necessary for a good self-image. By asserting who you are and how you think and feel is freeing yourself of repression and proving self-worth. This can free anxiety and bring confidence.

Analysis of assertive behavior can be academically described as responses to relations with people that

allow for one's opinions or feelings to be announced. Non-assertive behavior does not incorporate validating oneself. All of us in the group had experienced times when we did not act with assertion because we had repressed our feelings. This was usually because we were busy worrying about others' feelings, or we did not feel we had the right to say something. The training emphasized that people have rights and even responsibilities to express themselves. Non-assertive behavior is destructive to one's being: physically and mentally. Passive people tend to experience more illnesses, including chronic headaches.

Mary Jane sees assertiveness as a road. To either side of this road are ditches, one representing passive and weak behavior and the other representing aggressive and frustrated behavior. She felt that we must learn to actively fight to stay on the road and not fall in the ditches. Falling in the passive ditch does not only depreciate oneself, but can lead to repression. There is a danger of getting out of the passive ditch only to find that you have fallen into the aggressive one. Expressing oneself with aggressive behavior is also destructive as it can hurt others as well as yourself. This analysis helped us to real-

ize that by rejecting non-assertive behavior and maintaining assertive behavior, one can achieve a greater emotional freedom as it is not healthy to be subjected to the domination and aggression of others.

Women take assertiveness training more often than men. This is not surprising, when our society's stereotype of women is one of denial, weakness and dependence. Our main institutions like schools, religions, and the family do not encourage assertive behavior. Therefore, women do not learn appropriate responses and skills for assertion. Again, this is not surprising as it keeps the oppressed down and blaming themselves.

In developing our skills during the training, we role-played being assertive with someone with whom we felt we had problems. These included family members, bosses, professors, and roommates. In between the two sessions we all had time to practice our attempts at asserting ourselves. At the second session we reported our findings. I personally felt that by taking the training, my right to assert myself was validated. Instead of worrying about someone's feelings all the time, I felt freer to speak out when my feelings were being overlooked. We all felt that we were able to see what behavior we were undertaking, and made active deci-

sions to change passive behavior into assertive behavior.

The group had all experienced anxiety in speaking out in class. Mary Jane presented a formula to help us relax before speaking out. This involved deep breathing and concentration. We learnt that although we may be quite anxious before asserting ourselves, with practice there is usually a reduction in social anxieties. Although assertive people are respected more so than passive people, assertiveness can be labelled as aggressiveness. People can be threatened as they may be used to overpowering people by undermining them, and need to dequalify assertion.

All in all, it was an empowering workshop with time well spent. I figure that I now have new skills to help me enjoy a more relaxing and happy life. If anyone is interested in taking part of an Assertiveness Training Workshop you can contact Counselling Services at University Centre. The Women's Centre plans to organize another all-women group next spring. Remember, training is free for all students!

— (Information for this article was taken from Assertiveness Training Workshop lectures and handout sheets)

# LIVES OF WOMEN...

by Cathy Richardson

by Marne Jensen

Violence against women hurts us all. This was a main theme of the Women's Lives Conference, held at UVic September 28 and 29. All the women in attendance recognized that violence knows not the boundaries of class, lifestyle or ideology. All women are potential victims. As Glenda Simms, president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, illustrated, "the women's movement must focus on that which unites us, not that which divides us." Politicians are always exploiting the divisions within the women's movement to justify their lack of action. After all, how can important decisions be made when "the constituency is divided?" Unity around the issue of violence (one of the most brutal forms of oppression) may prove to be the greatest strength of the feminist movement in the '90s.

Violence in more indirect forms was addressed as well. Poverty was identified as an unequalizing force from which women, and consequently their children, suffer. Women representing all positions on the political spectrum agreed that society must eliminate the conditions which create poverty for women and children. There was consensus that welfare rates and the minimum wage must be increased. A recommendation which came out of the *Equity and Work* committee included that extended minimum wage benefits

be extended to include domestic workers (paid housekeepers), agricultural workers and sex-trade workers. As well, it was emphasized that the tasks which women perform outside the paid labour force are WORK. This work is of paramount importance to society and is worthy of respect. This could mean eventual incorporation into Canadian G.N.P. figures.

Tearing down barriers between women and the labour market is going to necessitate more subsidized daycare. Affordable and accessible childcare was recognized as a service essential to women trying to escape the cycle of poverty. Darlene Marzari, MLA, NDP Critic on the Status of Women, declared that the government subsidy which is presently allotted to daycare is the same money women would be earning in the work force if pay equity existed.

As the difficulties of fighting for equality were acknowledged it was emphatically declared by Katy Cook, past president of NAC, that "women must support each other whenever we do something to promote equality for women". Carol Gran, B.C. Minister Responsible for Women's Programs, asserted that she needs support in one of the most difficult jobs in the province - trying to educate Bill Vander Zalm and his Socred colleagues on issues concerning women's lives. She's probably right...

On September 28 and 29, the Women's Lives Conference was held at UVic to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Royal Commission's Report on the Status of Women. The conference's purpose was to review both the successes and the shortcomings of the Women's Movement. In reflecting on the impact of the report when it was tabled in the privy council in 1970, one must look at the social and economic backdrop.

Against the positive background of the human rights movement and economic affluence and generosity, expectations for change ran high. Since then, recession, restraint, and the revival of the neo-classical economic policy have run counter to progress for women. Despite the significance of the impact made by the report, changes in the economy and the dissipation of the mood of co-operative generosity have forced the women's movement into constant conflict with the state. The federal government's decision to cut funding to the Women's Centres this spring illustrates these changes. Clearly, the social and economic conditions in the 1990's presents a challenge in analysing the relationship between the women's movement and the state and the effects government economic policy will have on women's lives.

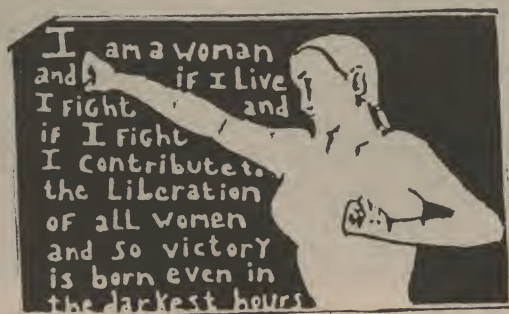
Monique Begin's speech, reflecting her experiences as the Executive chair of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and as a Liberal MP including a cabinet position as Minister of Health and Welfare, gave the participants the historical context necessary in examining the evolution of the Women's Movement in the last two decades in order to strategise for changes in the future.

The following morning, Glenda Simms presented another challenge to the conference participants. She spoke of the movement's inclusion of women of racial minorities, first nations and the working class. This inclusion has resulted in painful divisions between different groups of women. A serious implication of these divisions is that our government is able to refuse to take action on women's issues with the rationale that the "constituency is divided", and that the women's movement is "not representative of the majority". Glenda Simms called for a new feminism with an inclusive analysis of all oppressions as women suffer from racism, ageism, classism, and homophobia as well as sexism.

The participants took these challenges into four concurrent discussion workshops: Caring, Child Care, Care Givers; Equity and Work; Safety at Home and at Work; and Health Issues. The enormity and difficulty of the challenges was displayed in the Equity and Work discussion group. The topic was unfocused, and the women participating had many and sometimes conflicting concerns. While the time allotted to discussion was short, the group managed consensus on three different resolutions addressing fundamental issues surrounding women's work.

The four workshop facilitators presented resolutions addressing the barriers women face in society to the final plenary.

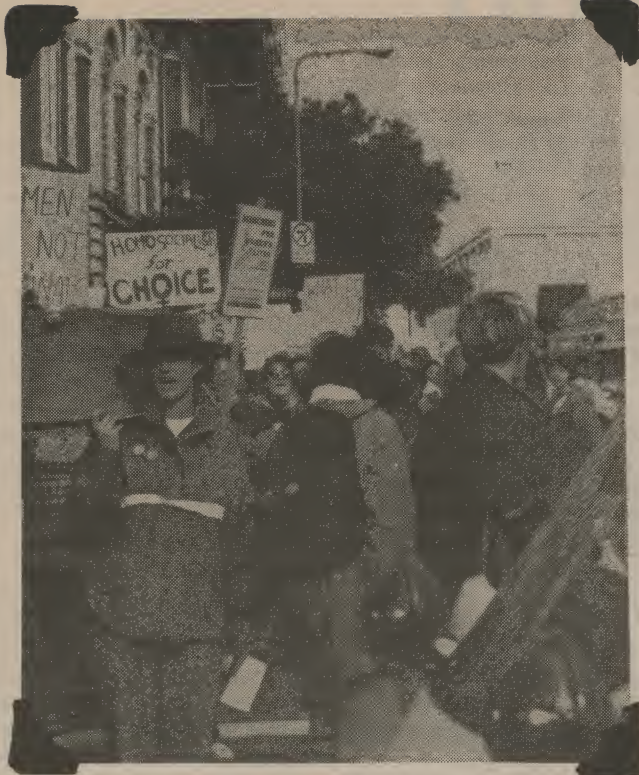
The conference left the participants with the conclusion that although we have made numerous gains, we face many difficult and exciting challenges and we have a lot of work to do.





# A Beginner's Guide to Feminist Theory

by Susanne Klausen



**“Without liberatory feminist theory, there can be no effective feminist movement. To fulfil this purpose feminist theory must provide a structure of analysis and thought that synthesizes that which is most visionary in feminist thinking, talk and discourse — those models of change that emerge from our understanding of sexism and sexist oppression in everyday life, coupled with strategies of resistance that effectively eradicate domination and engage us fully in a liberatory praxis.” Bell Hooks**

The Emily collective has been receiving many responses to our publication, *Emily Welcomes You to UVic*’, most of which has been positive, some of which has not. Although we know that causing dialogue to take place on campus means we are doing our job, we were surprised by some of the comments and questions by men and women which showed us just how little common understanding there is at times about issues related to feminism. Indeed, the meaning of the very word had as many definitions as there were definers.

We do not feel our role is to be one of explicating the varying concepts of feminism - we have Women’s Studies 200A and B for that - but we do believe that it is necessary for people who are engaging in dialogue to understand some feminist terminology. For this reason, we decided that it could be useful to provide a “survey at a glance” of the different branches of contemporary feminist theory. We hope that this will contribute to a clearer understanding of the issues, thereby raising the level of debate.

The issue of feminist theory raises an important question for those of us who work in the women’s movement: what is the relationship between the theory and practice of feminism? In one corner we see women too busy being feminists to read about it. You know who I mean - the single mom, too poor to go to university, too busy trying to make ends meet, that just surviving in the patriarchy takes all her life’s energy. In the other corner we have women who can afford to study feminism and love it so much that they continue to do just that . . . study it. Perhaps we could call them philosophical feminists, people who put theory over experience in the hierarchy of values in our society.

Somewhere in between we have praxis: understanding how the capitalist patriarchy functions and where in it we fit - and acting to change it. In the course of taking action both we and the world changes; a continuing spiral called a dialectic. “Given this framework, feminist theory should necessarily be directed to masses of women and men in our society, educating us collectively for critical consciousness so that we can explore and understand better the workings of sexism and sexist oppression, the political basis of feminist critique, and be better able to work out strategies for resistance.” (*Talking Back* by bell hooks, published by between the lines press, 1988, p.35.)

With the aim of clarifying for some students that there is more than one aspect of feminism in the movement - and that no one is “right” and others “wrong” - we offer the following survey. “ . . . hopefully this conversation of categories will be helpful to you as you think about your own projects and their place in the world and in your lives.” (Madeline R. Grumet.)

Note: The main source for the below survey was *Feminist Theory: the Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism*, by Josephine Donovan, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc., 1985. All Footnotes refer to it.

## Liberal Feminism

Four theories of feminism have had the most application in everyday life for feminists, and liberal feminism was the so-called “first wave” of the women’s movement. Although it began in mid-eighteen hundreds, liberal feminism continues to be an important face of feminism today. Women (who were primarily white and middle-class) fighting for the abolition of slavery came to recognize sexism in that movement and took the first steps to organize for women’s rights. At the famous Seneca Convention of 1848, liberal feminists declared that “woman is man’s equal” and fought for the equal education as the means of liberating women.

Generally there are a number of tenets of liberal feminism which place it in the overall age of enlightenment: 1) Faith in rationality, 2) confidence in the individual’s conscience, 3) conviction in the similarity between women and men, 4) belief in education as the force to change society 5) belief in the independence and ultimate isolation of the individual, 6) belief in the doctrine of natural rights.

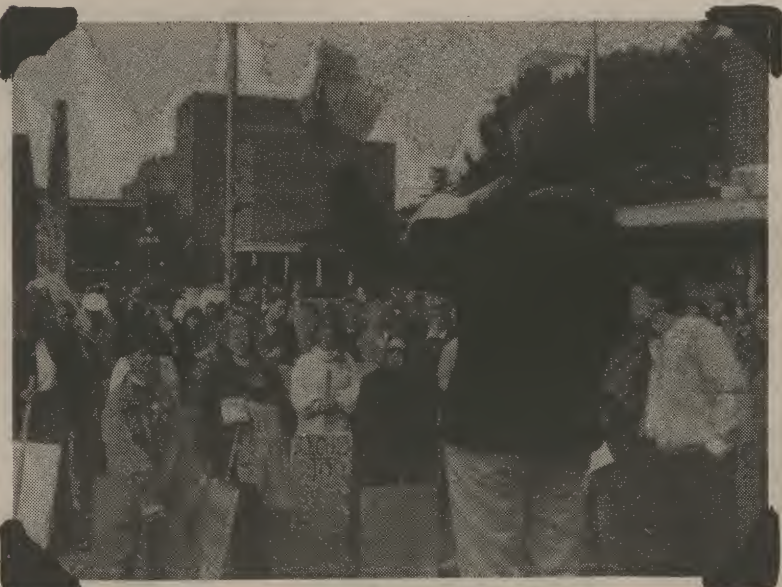
Overall, they declared there was no essential difference between women and men and wished for women the possibility of men’s “public” life. This original base of today’s women’s movement is still active and can be identified in such groups as NAC (National Action Committee) of Canada and NOW (National Organization of Women) in the U.S., fighting for such issues as legal reform and “equal rights”.

Critics of liberal feminism argue that this outlook does not go far enough in challenging the system of capitalist patriarchy which ultimately depends upon the oppression of women. Instead of fighting to be the “equal of unfree men”, other feminists go farther in pinpointing sources and motives of oppression. Seminal readings include *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, by Mary Wollstonecraft, *Course of Popular Lectures*, by Frances Wright, *Letters on Equality* by Sarah Grimke.

## Cultural/Maternal Feminism

Almost a reaction to liberal feminism, cultural, or maternal, feminism began at the turn of the century and is also an important contemporary branch of feminism. Simply put, cultural feminists celebrate the uniqueness of women’s experience. They hold there is a distinct woman’s “nature”; accepting a basic (some say biologically-determined) difference between the sexes, these feminists idealize, valorize woman. It is important to note that cultural feminists also fought hard for suffrage, but as a tool to protect the “woman’s realm”, held to be purer than men’s public realm.

This premise has been built upon recently by feminists who continue to assert that women are “naturally” more peaceful, non-violent, nurturing, etc. than are men. They hold women’s ability to reproduce as key to our experience and outlook as women. This belief has raised criticism that this description of “womanhood” is limiting, not to mention heterosexist. Also, feminists have questioned the emphasis put on the “nature” side of the issue while the issue of “culture” has not been given enough attention. Recommended readings include *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* by Margaret Fuller, *The Woman’s Bible* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Man Made World*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.



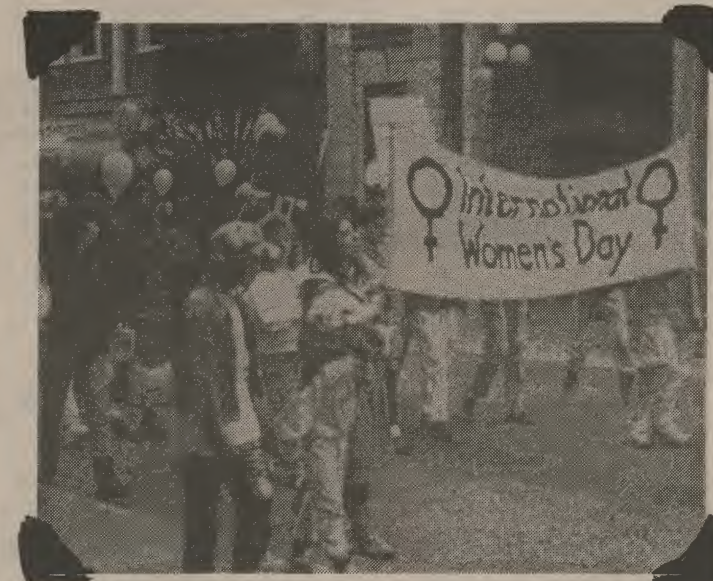
## Socialist Feminism

This and other strands of feminism are based upon theories which were developed by men and did not necessarily have “women’s liberation” as a goal. Nevertheless, analysis has it for some feminists that the groundwork laid by such men gave women tools to fight for women’s rights. In this case, Karl Marx gave powerful explanations of capitalism which socialist feminists have expanded upon to illustrate the systematic “ghettoization” of women the world over. Marx described the world as a place where “commodities command the human beings” but said he wished for “an unalienated world, a communistic world where people will experience a more holistic relationship to the products of their labour and where people will no longer be divided against one another because of their class relationship to the modes of production.”



He and Engels defined 1) material determinism, 2) theories about labour and capitalism (i.e., alienated labour, praxis, etc.), 3) origin of women’s oppression in the family, and believed women’s liberation would come about once women joined the working-class by working outside the home and as wage labourers. The contemporary woman’s movement “prompted Marxists to rethink the woman question . . . and a central concern . . . has therefore been to determine the role of the household in capitalist society.” (p.76) This has resulted in a number of issues which socialist feminists have concentrated on: 1) The question of domestic labour and its contribution to capitalism, 2) the relationship between women as wage earners and modes of production, 3) women and class, 4) the role of the traditional “family” in ideological socialization.

Socialist feminists do not hold, as do critical radical feminists, that women “as a class” are oppressed by men, rather they see that women can oppress women, depending on their positioning in relation to the modes of production. Other feminists have criticized Marxism and modern socialism as merely using women to further men’s gains and have no real commitment to the liberation of women; also that there has been little emphasis on the personal being political. Recommended readings include *Origin of the Family* by Frederick Engels, *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* by Eli Zaretsky, *Women’s Oppression Today* by Michele Barrett, *Women and Revolution*, ed. by Lydia Sargent, *Building Feminist Theory* the 1981 Quest anthology.

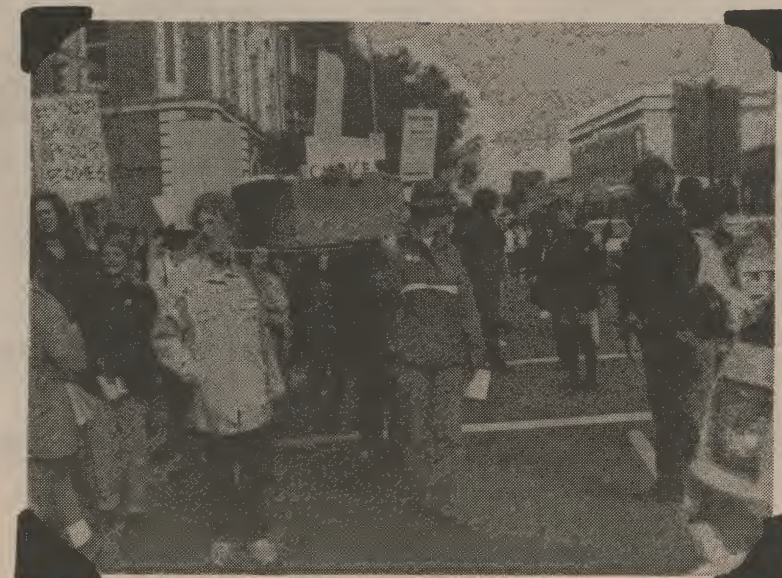


## Radical Feminism

Radical feminism evolved out of North American feminists’ experiences in the 1960’s peace and Black Power movements. “Much as nineteenth-century feminists became aware of their own oppression through the treatment they received from their male cohorts in the abolition movement, so twentieth-century radical feminists came to their consciousness in reaction the contemptuous treatment they received from male radicals in the “New Left.”” (p.141) A famous example is the 1969 anti-inauguration demonstration in Washington when feminists who spoke were insulted by such calls as “take her off the stage and fuck her” by men who were part of the demonstration. (p.141)

After realizing their position in civil rights and anti-war groups as second-class, feminists who broke away began to form theses of radical feminism in an attempt to create a cohesive attack on patriarchy. These include: 1) “That male supremacy and the subjugation of women was indeed the root model oppression in society and that feminism had to be the basis for any truly revolutionary change.” (142) 2) That the personal is political, meaning that what happens in the bedroom is equally as important and political as what happens in the boardroom. 3) That male-domination (not capitalism) is the cause of women’s oppression. 4) That women’s oppression is rooted primarily in psychological, not economic, factors, and force and ideological conditioning are used to maintain oppression. 5) “That women’s liberation and sexual liberation (are) not synonymous” (142); that sex and love are “ploys” used to reinforce oppression; the so-called sexual liberation movement” did not succeed in introducing equality in the realm of the erotic. 6) That women form a caste, a cultural fourth world, as a result of male imperialism.

A powerful voice of radical women of colour has emerged from this movement. Questions on the part of feminist theorists tend to concentrate on issues of class (economics) and biological determinism. Recommended readings include *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone, *Amazon Odyssey* by Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* by Mary Daly, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* by Susan Brownmiller, *Right Wing Women* by Andrea Dworkin, *This Bridge Called My Back*, eds. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, and *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde.



## Psychological Feminism

Psychological and existential (see below) branches of feminist theory have had less impact on the grassroots feminists. Although they are more academic in nature, both theories do have important implications for women; and both have influenced many contemporary feminists who are contributing to the movement today. Here is another strand of contemporary feminism based upon a male theorist, this time Sigmund Freud. Freud, like Marx “offered insights into the nature of women’s oppression . . . by his perception into the organization of human arrangements in the modern world . . .” (p.91)

Freud was the first person to attempt to analyze relations within the family. He developed theories which described a process by “which the infant evolves into the socially prescribed roles of adulthood . . .” (p.91), and the roles men and women play in families. Such theories have been expanded upon by feminists who see oppression of women as directly linked to such “socially prescribed roles”, but many feminists, including some psychological feminists, have written volumes denouncing Freud’s theories as male-centered, and biologically determined.

Freud coined the phrase “anatomy is destiny”, and although his writing is ambiguous at times relating to this issue, feminists see warning signs flashing whenever women’s oppression is deemed biologically determined. This is simply because a condition which has been predetermined by “nature” implies unalterability, and the continuance of the status quo. One example of many is his rationalization of “male aggressiveness as the biological necessity for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object.” (p.95)

Those feminists who continue the work of Freud do so by reading his work in “terms of social-cultural conditioning”; in other words women’s oppression is culturally created and Freud began the process of explaining the behaviors which result from such conditioning. Recommended readings include *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* by Sigmund Freud, *The Feminine Character* by Viola Klein, *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett, *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* by Juliet Mitchell, *The Reproduction of Mothering* by Nancy Chodorow.

# FEMINIST MOVEMENT

## Existentialist Feminism

The final branch of contemporary feminist theory based upon originally male theory is existentialist feminism. Such writers as Hegel, Heidegger, and of course Sartre have developed “the twentieth century philosophical movement . . .” (p.117), existentialism. Existentialism conceives of the “self as torn between two modes . . .” (p.119), which form a dialectic between the authentic self and the inauthentic self. The authentic self (the pour-soi, the transcending state of being) changes as a result of interaction with the inauthentic self (the en-soi, the state of non-being). Further, the pour-soi depends on the en-soi: “the subject consciousness depends on the existence of an Other . . .” (p.120) and develops itself in opposition to the Other.

Feminists built upon Sartre by identifying the en-soi with femininity and the pour-soi with masculinity, and Simone de Beauvoir was the first to “fully explain the place of women implied in the existentialist schema.” (p.122) She used existentialism to explain “the cultural and political status of women,” (1.122). For example, in society men are seen as the active transcending pour-soi and women are seen as Other. De Beauvoir quotes Pythagoras in describing the male and female, the being and non-being: “There is a good principle, which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle, which has created chaos, darkness, and woman.” (p.123)

She goes on to assert that women have a moral choice and puts responsibility on women to choose in favour of developing the pour-soi, which critics say shows little appreciation for the different situations and experiences of women around the world; in other words if a poor lesbian of colour is unable to develop her pour-soi, it is not because the cards are against her in capitalist patriarchy but rather it is her fault. Other feminists have continued existentialist work, building upon and challenging Beauvoir, including Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi and Mary Daly. Recommended readings on Feminist Existentialism include: *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Sacred and the Feminine: Toward a Theology of Housework*, by Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi





Unwinding

Blinding headlights  
Wipers drone  
Fan belts hot air  
Heavy eyes  
Front wheels wander  
On slick black pavement  
Dark house  
Rake stove embers  
Bath water roars  
Mint tea  
Soft flannel gown  
Late night news reel

Claire Heffernan

"It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting". Simone deBeauvoir

Mother's story  
tells of a Great Grandmother  
Cerridwen Priestess  
of the Left Hand Path  
inheritor of folk tradition  
she disseminated magic  
medicine & spells  
of five daughters  
not one honoured her art  
one followed the God of Abraham  
ignorant of the dangers  
in a paradise long lost  
forgotten  
she died in a man's clothes  
two turned inward  
wrote hellfire fables  
under male pseudonyms  
& the fourth & fifth  
sister resisters  
came stillborn onto the  
cabin's rust-stained  
bloodstained mattress  
I heard this at thirteen  
& wept  
& now I work through  
my book of shadows  
my potions  
charms  
rejoicing in the  
Wise Woman  
from whose womb  
I come

Gail D. Whitter

#### I am a feminist because...

Because woman's work is never done and is underpaid or unpaid or boring or repetitious and we're the first to get the sack and what we look like is more important than what we do and if we get raped it's our fault and if we get bashed we must have provoked it and if we raise our voices we're nagging bitches and if we enjoy sex we're nymphos and if we don't we're frigid and if we love women it's because we can't get a "real" man and if we ask our doctor too many questions we're neurotic and/or pushy and if we expect community care for children we're selfish and if we stand up for rights we're aggressive and 'unfeminine' and if we don't we're typical weak females and if we want to get married we're out to trap a man and if we don't we're unnatural and because we still can't get an adequate, safe contraceptive but men can walk on the moon and if we can't cope or don't want a pregnancy we're made to feel guilty about abortion and for lots and lots of other reasons we are part of the women's liberation movement.

- from a leaflet by the British National Union of Students, Women's Campaign

#### INSULAR POSITION

I was delighted to read *Insular Position*, a first book of poetry by Gail D. Whitter. *Whitter* explores the life of a young woman who is "Enabler Lover Martyr" and looks from the inside at the life of co-dependency, within a series of connected poems. Whitter immediately brings the reader into this narrative by her intense use of language and continues to keep their attention rivetted throughout the book. The graphic language enhances the reading as well as the subtle use of different type styles.

Whitter weaves a tale as shocking as a thriller, holding us to the edge of our chair. She explores the fabric of life in the drug scene with a delicate hand, only to be shocked from our middle-class complacency when half-way through the story, when we are brought up short.

Several lines stand out as exceptional poetry:

throwing back the lid  
she exposes bent  
blackbottomed spoons  
so damn smooth

she forgets to breathe  
This contrasts sharply with another small poem:

amid black tusks  
& ivory  
rims of porcelain  
chrysanthemums  
in mahjong cubes  
silks and sandalwood  
you

The only flaw I could find with this book is its shortness. While it is refreshing to read a poet who knows the value of brevity it is also disappointing that there are not further sections to this book. We want more from this poet who has had over 140 publications in recent years.

*Insular Position*, written by Gail D. Whitter is published by Trabarni Productions, edited by Maidie Hilmo, 63 pages, available from Trabarni Productions, 1531 - 550 Cottonwood Avenue, Coquitlam, BC, V3J 2S1 at \$7.95 with \$2.00 postage and handling.

by Karen Ballinger

#### THE MAN IN BLACK

stands  
every night  
beside my bed  
waiting  
he is the man chasing me  
around the gym  
yelling - I'll kill you you fucking  
bitch  
if I catch you  
he is the man  
waiting for me on the beach  
to sunbathe  
little knowing I carry a knife  
to cut through cheese  
the man who shows everyone  
else  
his pleasant side  
he thinks he can manipulate me  
but I have my invisible red shield  
to protect me  
my refusal to give control  
he is the rapist  
the boy who sat next to you  
in high school  
the bank manager  
the dentist  
he is Everyman  
and No Man

Karen Ballinger

#### SHE WALKS WITH TREE TRUNK LEGS

that support her connection  
to the Mother  
grounded  
she knows that flying  
will never again be possible  
yet mourns  
the liftoff,  
the soar,  
the arrival  
she walks with tree trunk legs  
blue veins tell the story  
of two children carried  
but rooted in the earth  
she carries herself proudly  
as a Goddess

Karen Ballinger

"I learned to make my mind large,  
as the universe is large, so that  
there is room for paradoxes."  
Maxine Hong Kingston

Rose Peters

She didn't have a pretty face  
She had an Indian face  
Last seen  
Holy Saturday night leaving the bar  
Joining the sixteen other women  
Over the past three years  
Beaten to death and dumped in  
back alleys  
No pattern  
No particular style

Claire Heffernan

I am labelled a "feminist" when I  
say things which distinguish me  
from a doormat!  
wise woman

Drafts of life  
pass through the mail  
like a mixed bag  
a web we weave  
seeking our foremothers  
our mothers  
re-visioning the ancient  
female arts  
sisters of comfort  
laying on hands  
our hands  
giving and lending strength  
cradling domestic details  
common concerns  
dreams  
printsisters  
imprinting the public i  
unlike Eve  
we are not alone

from  
THE ABANDONED GARDEN  
a work in progress

Gail D. Whitter





# SCIENTIFICALLY SPEAKING

by Jodi Jensen

On October 16, Hilda Ching, a parascientologist at SFU who holds the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Professor Chair for B.C. and the Yukon, spoke at UVIC on "Exploding the Myths of Women and Science".

Ching is concerned that women may continue to be ignorant in a world that is increasingly run by science and technology. Women suffer from invisibility within the sciences and in general do not score as high on science literacy tests as do men, who often have more education and exposure to science. Ching explained the biological and social myths, and overt and systematic forms of discrimination which serve to keep women out of challenging scientific careers, before moving on to share her vision of a science transformed by women.

Cultural barriers to women in science include the common perception of science as male, "masculine" in terms of being logical, analytical, unemotional (except maybe a passion for truth), and competitive. This perception is reinforced by stereotyped images of men in white lab coats and by such projects and the space race of the 1960's to put "man on the moon". According to Ching, women realize that this perception of science does not apply to them and are therefore unable to visualize themselves working within science.

Attitudes to work have been historically constructed on the premise of separate spheres for men and women, production versus reproduction. A recent survey showed 40% of young girls think their career will be restricted to that of homemaker. In reality, only 7-8% of women spend all their time at home; the labour force is 44% female. Girls have unrealistic images for their future and are often unaware of non-traditional career opportunities. Women are commonly considered a poor investment in the workplace because they may stop work when they marry and have children. However, 65% of working women have children under the age of three; the "poor investment" myth simply acts as another barrier to women.

Other cultural barriers described by Ching are the theories of gender related differences in ability, the perception that you have to be born with the "right" kind of brain to do well at science or math. In the 1970's standardized tests, measuring verbal, spatial, and mathematical abilities, were popular. Girls scored slightly higher in verbal and computational abilities, while boys scored slightly higher in spatial visualization and problem-solving. Biological differences in ability have been attributed to genetics (X or Y chromosomes), hormones (testosterone or estrogen), and brain lateralization (right or left). For example, it was proposed that hormone levels led to the difference in ability: high levels of estrogen favoured repetitive tasks such as computation for women, while the high levels of testosterone

found in males at puberty had adverse effects on their verbal abilities. However, as Ching pointed out, women's abilities didn't fluctuate at puberty, and hormone levels themselves fluctuate between individuals of both sexes, with age, and are affected by environmental factors such as stress. As well, if the test differences do relate to ability, why aren't there more women lawyers and politicians, considering their superior verbal skills? The differences found by the standardized tests were small and are now, on recent tests, found to be disappearing.

Currently popular is sociobiology, the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behaviour, which assumes qualities such as cooperation and aggression are genetically inherited. To Ching, this study smacks of biological determinism, ignoring social forces, declaring women by nature nurturing, men by nature competitive. If logically extended, sociobiology must give biological explanations of war and religion, which is clearly ridiculous.

Two commonly held beliefs about women and science are: wo-



men are not interested in science, and only exceptional women succeed at scientific careers. However, surveys have discovered that girls start out with the same interest in science as boys, but by high school boys are more interested. Girls seem to be turned off by the curriculum, losing interest if unable to relate course material to their daily lives. Ching explained how this loss of interest leads to the perception that women must be exceptional to go into science, because interest is related directly to ability, and because there are few role models for girls.

Lack of confidence also works as a barrier for women. Young boys are found to have a more positive attitude towards science, and both boys and girls feel it is more important for boys to learn science than girls. These attitudes coincide with greater career access and enrollment in science for men. Informal learning, role models, and more attention in the classroom all lead to greater confidence in boys. Ching stressed the importance of feedback in building confidence in girls in order to increase their classroom participation, which is necessary to learn and remain interested in science. Girls are discouraged from continuing in the sciences by parents, teachers, their peers, and society.

According to Ching, societal perceptions reduce women's motivation, self confidence and commitment to a scientific career, creating feelings of ambivalence which may lead women to give up their careers or go on to more routine and less challenging work.

Discrimination is the most ob-

vious barrier to women, whether overt or covert, causing women to be banned from some types of labs or research, or systematic, involving hiring and promotion. Ching hopes employment equity programs will provide opportunities for women in science, and identify and eliminate some of the barriers women face. Changes in the labour market may also be beneficial to women, as more jobs in science and engineering are created, and the rate of retirement of scientists from academia increases. Also helpful are government initiatives, such as science awareness programs and career funding for women. Various groups of women scientists are forming retention strategies to stop the loss of women from science at the graduate school level.

Ching firmly believes the number of women in science will increase. The transformation of our world by science will be paralleled by a transformation of science and the scientific curriculum by women. Ching envisions hands-on and minds-on participation in the classroom relevant to include the teacher not as an expert with all the right answers, but as someone to share all the unknowns of science along with the knowns. Ching wants to change the culture of science to allow different ways of asking questions and solving problems, using group collaboration and consensus instead of hierarchy. A dialectic approach to science will include shades of meaning and "fuzzy" rather than polarized thinking, leading to a better kind of science that includes women.

## WITCH

"W.I.T.C.H., otherwise known as the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, surfaced last Halloween (1969?). Their inaugural day began with an Up Against the Wall Street, all-day guerilla theater procession in which the witches cast hexes on the Stock Exchange, declared "You Have A Fiend at Chase Manhattan" and created general terror and chaos. Halloween night the guerilla witches flew through the Lower East Side, zapping all-male bars, girlie (sic) burlesque houses, and chic uptown-tourist infringements on the community.

WITCH is an all-woman Everything: It's theatre, revolution, magic, terror, joy, garlic, flowers, spells. It's an awareness that witches and gypsies were the original guerilla and resistance fighters against oppression - particularly the oppression of women - down through the ages."

By WITCH p. 151 *The New Woman* Fawcett Publications Incorporated.

This may be why 9 million women were burned as witches!

## FILM

On the evening of October 31, known in Canadian popular culture as Hallowe'en, Cinecenta is sponsoring a benefit viewing of two amazing NFB films THE BURNING TIMES and THE GODDESS REMEMBERED. These refreshingly pro-women productions 'de-spell' deeply ingrained patriarchal myths about women, history, and spirituality. These films may be the TRICK AND THE TREAT we've been waiting for all our lives - the ugly bitch on the broom is the patriarchal representation of millions of women murdered for their political/spiritual/medical beliefs and practices (we were all tricked). The treat is that we now know it was all a lie. Admission is free and donations will be taken for the Victoria Women's Transition House.



# ON STRENGTH & POWER

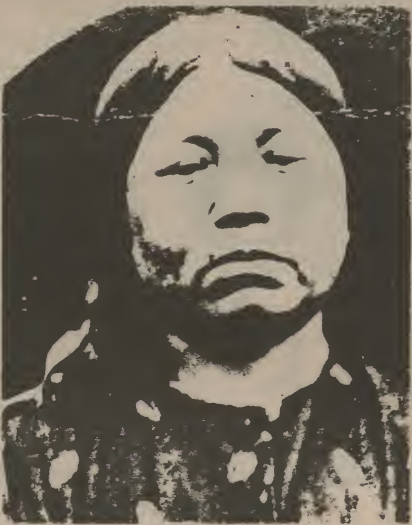
by Claire Heffernan

According to some feminists, the term *power* means taking control of one's life in many areas; psychologically, physically, socially, economically and ethically. *Empowerment* is the word which describes steering toward that goal. It is manifested in a number of ways. These include lobbying for affirmative action in the workplace, writing letters to your M.P. for day care in your community, leaving an abusive relationship, returning to school. The list is endless.

As every feminist knows, language is a very powerful shaper of attitudes and beliefs. We only have to look at how the term Pro-Life can marginalise women's lives by denying a women's right to essential health care. However I have never been comfortable with the words power or empowerment. Power still means authority, control, might...the ability to act or perform effectively. Empowerment...to authorize, to invest with legal power - to act out the above noun.

Fortunately two Mohawk women rescued me from my power - empowerment dilemma. According to Osennotion and Skonanaganleh:ra, authors of "Our World", (Canadian Women's Studies, vol 10, No. 2 & 3), they view power as *force*, something *external* - a characteristic of a political movement or imbalances in personal relationships. They support the idea of *strength* and explain that this concept comes from the creator and is perceived as *internal*.

Some people call it the Great Law of Peace.



Songish Indian woman  
c. 1870.

This law does not define rights, only responsibilities; to observe the clans, to bring honour, trust and respect; to be kind; honest; share and have *strength*, to maintain a relationship with all of the natural world.

These two aboriginal women rely on the strength of their relationships with all creatures great and small and try to be the very best human beings - not the strongest, not the biggest, not the one who's dogma claims that they are the best.

In aboriginal society women are responsible for all the norms and have a direct spiritual relationship to Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon and the female elements of the waters. The division of responsibility between men and women in the home were very clearly defined. An aboriginal woman's role was that of nourisher, the man as protector. Man was the helper, he reacted. The women acted. In

many ways she was more important than her male partner. She also reminded men of their responsibilities and lived in a very cooperative environment. Unlike European women who were considered appendages of their husbands, Aboriginal women were keepers of the fire - the fire which is at the centre of aboriginal beliefs - the keeper of the culture.

The coming of the Europeans disrupted every aspect of aboriginal life. The land is now sick and the resources that both women and men relied upon to fulfil their part of their responsibilities have been ravaged. *Power* remains an oppressive term and will always mean living in a patriarchal, sexist, racist, homophobic and environmentally destructive community. A community where money is sacrosanct, and where many violent acts are committed to all members of that community as a result of our worship of money and power instead of a reverence for all forms of life. *Empowerment* is the verb that allows women to become just as ruthless as some of our male counterparts.

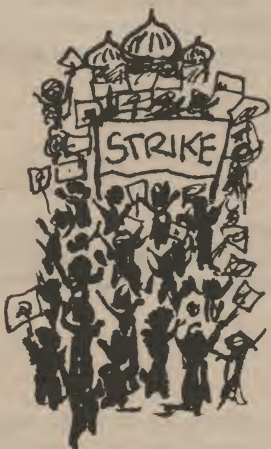
I believe that the terms *power* and *empowerment* are perverted terms that allow women the opportunity to become involved in and support a climate of *business as usual as long as some women are prospering from the arrangement*. Power, like the word *rape* means to denigrate, hurt, control or maim. These words should not be used by feminists to somehow advance their cause. Educated white middle class feminists have rightly or wrongly, consciously or unconsciously, embraced the concept of power or empowerment. I believe inner strength or the search to find that strength, better describes feminist values and goals.



## revolution

"The Russian Revolution was begun by women. On International Women's Day in 1917 (March 8 in the western calendar), women textile workers went out on strike in Petrograd and sent an appeal to other workers to support them. Their demands were modest - for bread, against the autocracy, and against the war - but this strike was the beginning of the revolution which was to culminate first in the overthrow of the czar and then in the overthrow of the capitalist class."

Caroline Lund from Leon Trotsky's *Women and the Family*





# HORRORSCOPES

patriarchal signs for a patriarchal planet

by Emmeline Archer

### Scorpio:

You are in the act of movement. The attainment of goals and then moving forward and beyond. This shift you are feeling has been a long time in coming and is one of the first steps in a long line. It is crucial that you take extreme care in the time ahead to guard these victories you have accomplished and to ensure more of them. Happy Birthdays and good luck.



### Sagittarius:

Again there is a victory motif. You are doing well and your season is still on the horizon. For you it is important to clarify and see things as they are, make sure that you are listening to the people around you. Make sure that you are listening to yourself. My compliments, my dears.



### Capricorn:

What you need to do is decide who you are. It is time to take positive action in the direction that meets your needs, unfortunately you are still not clear on what those are. Take heart, the process of discovery will be a pleasant one. You know the way.



### Aquarius:

Hello, water children. It seems like you are a long, long way away. Everything is harmonious there in the depths of your soul. I see the radicalism brewing under the surface. People might not accept it all the time, maybe hardly ever, but you know who matters, you know the truth.

### Pisces:

Feeling a bit like a fish out of water? It is to be expected. Things are hectic now, there are a million demands on your time; it is important that you start considering what is most important to you and how that can best be accomplished. Your talents will probably be wasted if you lend them out to too many.



### Aries:

I think you might have sunk your teeth in a bit too far. Taurus gets to be the stubborn one. I can see great difficulties ahead if you do not make room for others, if no attempt is made at inclusion. You are a kind and generous person, and you are doing an injustice to yourself in always insisting on having your own way. There are many ways, yours is but one.



### Taurus:

You do get to be stubborn and this is probably the very best time of year for you to indulge yourself. It is clear that you know what you want and that your tenacity will pay off. This is no time to abandon your Taurean ways and there is no time like the present--but I don't need to tell you that.



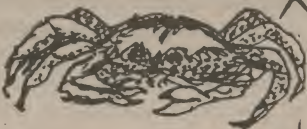
### Gemini:

Hey little sisters! Oh I know it seems maybe a bit on the terrible side right now but it is all for the greater good. I hear your displeasure, I am infinitely concerned about it. I am powerless to stop it. Ahead of you are some of the sweetest days you will ever know.



### Cancer:

The long stretch of greyness is starting to clear. I am happy to say that the sun is moving you slowly to happier days. I have seen this pattern before throughout the course of this sign and all I can say is that it is worth the wait. You have tremendous reserves and they will pull you through.



### Leo:

Hello sunshine. You are evolving into quite pleasant people, however long it might take for the completion of this cycle. I know you are trying and that the planets are not always in your corner, but you will succeed. I can see it shining through, if you squint you might be able to see it for yourself.



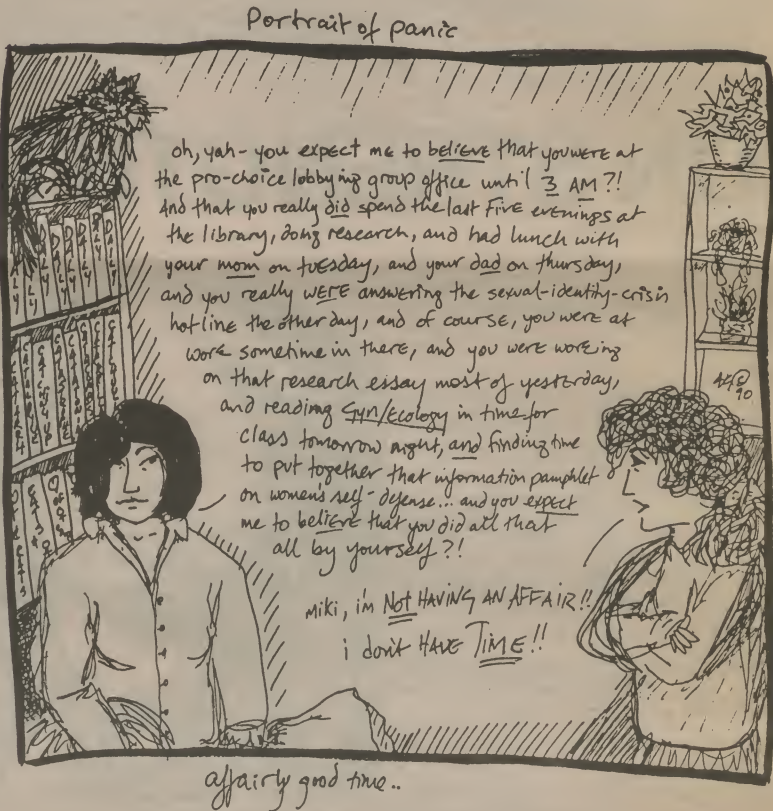
### Virgo:

Hope it is all jello and whipping cream for you after the difficult birthday month. I think you need a vacation and Calgon is not going to do the trick. If you do not start dealing with all that stuff it is going to bury you. No sense in making it worse than it is.



### Libra:

Since you missed out on all the birthday stuff, I hope you had a very happy one. It looked good but I have a hard time with retrospectives. I see your efforts at self-preservation and I am impressed. Now you need to let a little more in. Balance, my sweets, balance.



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